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ABSTRACT

The systematic approach to career education for special education students described in the monograph was developed by the Yonkers Career Education staff; it begins with a diagnostic evaluation of the student's capabilities and constraints on those capabilities. This approach leads to the establishment of an individualized career development program tailored to the special needs of that student. Feedback systems for readjusting prescriptive plans are incorporated on a short-term basis through pre- and posttesting of specific activities. Long-term gains can be observed by a periodic readministration of the complete diagnostic battery. The ultimate aim of the diagnostic prescriptive plan is to provide the type of educational program that will lead to the special needs student's employability in an occupation which he prefers and in which he feels the greatest degree of self-confidence and competency. Educational characteristics of the mentally retarded, characteristics of an educational program for the mentally retarded, and characteristics of a career education program for the mentally handicapped are outlined, and 16 specific adaptations of a career education program to suit it to the needs of the mentally retarded are suggested. (Author/AJ)

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Career Education Implications for Special Education

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CAREER EDUCATION IMPLICATIONS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

Are we accepting the challenge and responsibility of educating students with special needs? A basic tenet of a democratic public school system is to offer an education designed to meet the needs of all the people. Teacher education has prepared teachers and suggested programs which are designed primarily to meet the needs of the average and above average. Some modifications have been made where necessary to accommodate, or tolerate, those who do not fit into the average school system. Unfortunately, we still have those among us who would educate the BEST and expel the REST.

The parents in the community send to our schools the best students they have, in fact they send our schools *all* they have.

Some of these children are gifted, retarded, physically handicapped, emotionally disturbed or socially maladjusted. A major portion of these children are considered to be average "All American" boys and girls. The fact remains that whether or not these children are retarded or gifted, physically handicapped or emotionally disturbed, they are born to average, brilliant and dull parents, into highly educated and illiterate families alike. It is possible for gifted parents to have a retarded child. Not a single racial, religious, social, economic or national group is excluded from having children with special needs.

Educators profess to meeting the individualized needs of pupils in the special atmosphere of the laboratory or classroom environment. Some excellent examples of such programs are in the existence throughout the country. More often than not, however, the teacher is almost wholly unprepared to recognize the special needs or to modify programs accordingly for those students who deviate from the norm to any degree. Problems of facilities, scheduling and administration may make it impossible for the teacher to attempt modifications that appear desirable. All too often the result is an attempt on the part of the individual student to adapt to the program as it is offered; the resulting loss of interest and achievement, socially and intellectually, can never be regained.

EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MENTALLY RETARDED

Three distinct groups of retarded children have been defined for educational purposes by Kirk and Johnson. (6) They categorized these as the mentally deficient (which includes the trainable retarded), the

mentally handicapped (educable mentally retarded), and the slow learner.

By general agreement, the mentally deficient children are said to be those with measured intelligence quotients of 30 to 55 or 60. The mentally handicapped are said to be those with intelligence quotients between 55 to 60 to 80, while the slow learners are said to have a measured intelligence quotient in the range between 80 and 95.

At very best, instruments purporting to measure IQ provide only approximate values. Further, it has been demonstrated that scores made by an individual on intelligence tests may vary from day to day. This does not necessarily mean that an individual's I.Q. varies from day to day, but more likely that different variables can operate from day to day to cause scores to vary. Thus it would seem that the distinction between the educable mentally handicapped and the slow learner is academic except at the extremes of the combined groups. This argument is implied in Kirk's recent book *Educating Exceptional Children.* When speaking of the characteristics of the mentally retarded Kirk states:

> ". . . To more adequately represent the educable mentally retarded child the profile should be a band rather than a line. They range in I.Q. from 50 or 55 up to 75 or 80." (7)

In line with the above reasoning, it would seem justified to talk in terms of a program for both groups. A carefully planned program of career education for the slow learners would, in all likelihood, serve the educable mentally handicapped just as well.

So long as generalizations concerning a given group are used with care, they may prove to be helpful in providing direction for an educational program. The specifics of a program must, in the final analysis, be based upon careful study of the individuals who will participate in the program. This means that a career education program for the mentally handicapped will vary in detail and content as the personnel change and as the demands imposed by a changing society differ from year to year.

The mentally retarded represent about 3 to 5 per cent of schoolage children. The mentally retarded child is a low achiever. It should be pointed out, however, that not all low achievers are mentally retarded. The mentally retarded low achiever, according to Goldstein, has limited ability to reason, to cope with abstract concepts, and to perceive essential facts and effect relevent relationships. (3)

A typical – or perhaps it would be better to say "generalized" – mentally retarded child of 11 years of age might range in height of an 8 year old to that of a 13 year old. His weight and motor coordination might

well fall in the same range. His mental ability, however, would range from that of a five year old to that of an eight year old. His social maturity might range from that of a five year old to that of his "normal" peer group. This factor appears to be rather closely related to the socio-economic status of his home environment. In speech and language development, he may be in the range of that for a five year old to an eight year old. The range of his development in the areas of reading, arithmetic reasoning, arithmetic computation and spelling may range between that for a five year old to about a nine year old.

In regard to personal and social characteristics of the educable mentally retarded, Kirk (7) indicates that the child may have a short attention span, the inability to concentrate along with a low frustration tolerance. His low frustration tolerance may well be due to his repeated failure to perform to acceptable standards with regular academic work. The retarded child's play interests are usually those of younger children. Compared with normal and superior learners, the mentally retarded are inclined to:

1. Have a shorter attention span.
2. Experience greater difficulty in learning generally and particularly in dealing with symbols and abstractions associated with academic work.
3. Have more difficulty in solving problems, seeing relationships, generalizing, and in transferring and applying what they have learned.
4. Demonstrate less ability and less inclination to: create, explore, plan, and assume a leadership role in such activities.
5. Be more easily distracted.
6. Undertake fewer tasks on their own initiative and leave incomplete a higher proportion of those undertaken.
7. Be less adept at discerning details and slight, though important, distinctions.
8. Exhibits more physical defects, and tend to experience slower physical development, particularly coordination.
9. Reveal a greater discrepancy between their aspirations and their abilities to achieve them.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR THE MENTALLY RETARDED

Gruikshank (1) and others have indicated that the basic goals of an educational program for the mentally retarded are essentially the same as those for all children. Kirk (7) has pointed out that the four major

objectives set forth by the Educational Policies Commissions are valid for programs for the mentally retarded. These objectives are as follows: (1) self-realization, (2) human realtionships, (3) economic efficiency, and (4) civic responsibility. (2) The essential difference, it would seem, is in the addition of specific goals. Kirk and Johnson (6) have suggested the following:

1. They should be educated to get along with their fellow men: i.e., they should develop social competence through numerous experiences.
2. They should learn to participate in work for the purpose of earning their own living; i.e., they should develop social competence through efficient career guidance and training as part of their school experience.
3. They should develop emotional security and independence in the school and in the home through a good mental hygiene program.
4. They should learn the minimum essentials of tool subjects, even though their academic limits are third to fifth grade.
5. They should learn to occupy themselves in wholesome leisure time activities through a program that teaches them to enjoy recreational and leisure time activities.
6. They should learn to become adequate members of a family and a home through an educational program that emphasizes home membership as a function of the curriculum.
7. They should learn to become adequate members of a community through a school program that emphasizes community participation.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A CAREER EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR THE MENTALLY HANDICAPPED

A basic assumption is made that a career education program can and should make an important contribution to the education of the mentally retarded: In general a career education program can make a significant contribution to the attainment of objectives in the general categories of personal and emotional adjustment, social adjustment, and economic adjustment.

Due to the paucity of research in the area of career education for the mentally retarded, much has had to be learned by trial and error. Perhaps an effective means for developing sound educational goals and objectives for a career education program for the mentally retarded would be to review follow-up studies in the area of occupational adjustment. Studies concerned with the job adjustment of the mentally retarded have clarly indicated some of the basic problems which interfere with the job success

of the mentally retarded. Some of the major job adjustment problems are as follows:

1. Lack of punctuality – both on arriving at the job and leaving the job.
2. Failure to be responsible enough to notify the employer ahead of time in case of absence.
3. Lack of interest in their work.
4. Lack of cleanliness or adequacy of dress on the job.
5. Lack of ability to accept criticism from supervisors and fellow workers.
6. Inability to get along with fellow workers.
7. Inability to react to pressure.
8. Lack of ability to work unsupervised.
9. Failure to attempt assigned work.
10. Failure to complete assigned work.
11. Lack of ability to remain for prolonged periods of time on a given job.
12. Inability to perform tasks in a neat and orderly manner.
13. Lack of ability to move from one job to another (mobility).
14. Failure to ask for assistance when it is needed.
15. Disrespect for equipment, tools, and materials.

Only when teachers realize that the mentally retarded, for the most part, lack self-control, a sense of responsibility, self-initiative, self-determination, a positive standard of performance, and an inability to socialize cooperatively and amiably with other individuals, can they begin the task of providing a career education program which will effectively meet their individual needs. Teachers must realize that personal-social training is a vital influence in adult success and consequently determines whether the traditional occupational education program or a program based on personal-social training is of first importance.

In general, it is true that the majority of the educable mentally handicapped and a few of the trainable mentally handicapped can qualify for unskilled or semi-skilled occupations. The career education program can provide the prevocational-vocational experiences which may provide advantageous entry into the labor force. Before seeking employment in competitive industry the student must be well adjusted personally, emotionally, and socially. Being unable to work cooperatively with his fellow workers, to take orders from more than one person, or to follow specific directions can seriously jeopardize his position on the job.

The possibility of a mentally retarded adult being successful in competitive industry is mainly dependent upon his having developed sound work habits and attitudes during the formative years of his life. Attitudes and habits are constantly being introduced, reinforced, and reorganized throughout an individual's life. These habits and attitudes, sound or unsound will determine, in part, whether or not the individual will succeed in an adult society.

The teacher must continuously be aware of the fact that he must stress the introduction and development of sound work habits and attitudes during the period of time he is working with the educable mentally retarded. It is essential that the following attitudes be continually stressed:

1. Attentiveness
2. Personal appearance
3. Perseverance
4. Self initiative
5. Responsibility
6. Punctuality
7. Cooperativeness
8. Ability to get along with others
9. Self control
10. Ability to accept criticism
11. Ability to accept and adjust to frustrating situations
12. Ability to follow verbal directions
13. Ability to attempt assigned work
14. Ability to complete assigned work
15. Ability to perform tasks in a neat and orderly manner
16. Ability to work steadily
17. Ability to work unsupervised
18. Ability to transfer learning
19. Ability to seek help when necessary
20. Ability to move from one job to another
21. Ability to use time wisely
22. Ability to accept authority

ADAPTING A CAREER EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR THE MENTALLY RETARDED

Prior to establishing a career education program for the mentally retarded, specific adaptations should be considered by the curriculum planning committee. Karnes (5) suggests the following specific adaptations in the industrial arts program which are appropriate as well in the career education program:

1. Relatively less emphasis and dependence placed upon the reading and study of written materials of a technical nature.
2. Considerably more emphasis upon the development of skills which are involved in a great variety of industrial occupations classed no higher than semi-skilled - - - - the ones which the mentally retarded may have sufficient aptitudes and the ones which are most likely to be employable.
3. Relatively more emphasis upon group undertakings as opposed to individual projects and activities.
4. More attention to organizing the class as the unskilled and semi-skilled labor force of an industrial plant, rather than employing a personnel system which includes middle and top management.
5. Greater proportion of class time devoted to larger number of simple individual and group projects which can be completed in a short period of time.
6. Relatively more emphasis upon personal economics and less upon the economic aspects of the industrial establishment, and this tied to the selection and consumption of industrial products.
7. Greater proportion of class time devoted to mass production projects involving the entire group.
8. More emphasis upon development of responsibility for proper care of tools, returning them to proper place in the shop, and for orderly housekeeping in general.
9. Relatively less emphasis upon close tolerances, precise measurements, fine details, superior finishes, and other factors of craftsmanship.
10. More emphasis upon occupational information pertaining to the unskilled and semi-skilled industrial occupations to the exclusion of detailed information concerning the highly skilled, technical, and professional classifications.
11. Heavier emphasis upon the actual tools, machines, and three-dimensional materials as vehicles of instruction as opposed to symbols, complicated drawings, etc.

12. Greater effort to guard against repetitive tasks which constitute no more than busy work, since the mentally retarded are prone to engage in work without purpose.
13. Greater emphasis upon group planning as opposed to individual planning.
14. Greater emphasis upon practical projects of utilitarian value to members of the class.
15. Encouragement of pupils to choose, design, create, and plan, accompanied by greater tolerance in permitting them to execute their ideas and plans as crude as they may be.
16. Relatively less emphasis upon hobby recreational activities but not to their exclusion.

PROPOSAL

A potential program currently being researched by the Yonkers Career Education Staff consists of a diagnostic evaluation to determine interests and the level of real functioning ability of any exceptional child. This information matched with minimum competency performance objectives obtained from actual potential employers in the community who have made some commitment to hire trained students on a trial basis, will determine the curriculum.

DIAGNOSTIC EVALUATION DESIGN

The establishment of an appropriate career education program for special needs students requires an intensive assessment of each student's capabilities and deficits in several areas. The following is a suggestion for a systematic approach to the identification of a special needs student's own unique strengths and weaknesses, and the development of an appropriate educational plan for that particular student.

THE DIAGNOSTIC BATTERY

The diagnostic process begins with the administration of a battery of four instruments designed to gain evaluative information in several learning domains. The battery includes two standardized instruments and two assessments designed to elicit specific occupational data necessary for prescribing an individual's own career development program. The complete battery gives the educational planner valuable data on the student's academic abilities, his self concept, his general knowledge of various occupations and an understanding of that student's occupation preferences.

A description of the four instruments follows:

1. *Academic Achievement* - - - Wide Range Achievement Test (WRAT) Scores on arithmetic, reading, and spelling levels of the WRAT provide a broad assessment of the student's academic skills. The scores are recorded by grade level starting at nursery and extending through college level. The grade level scoring procedure aids in determining appropriate instructional levels.

   The WRAT was chosen for the brevity of administration time (approximately 20-30 minutes for the three subtests).

2. *Self-Concept* - - - Stanley Coopersmith's "Self Esteem Inventory and Behavior Rating Form".

   A self-concept test was included in the diagnostic battery to provide the educational planner with insight into the personal attitudes of each student. Special needs students traditionally exhibit poor self images and negative attitudes toward school.

   The Coopersmith inventory was selected for inclusion in this batter for two distinct reasons:

   a. The test scores cover four separate areas of self esteem:
      1. General Self.
      2. Self in relation to peers.
      3. Self in relation to home.
      4. Self in relation to school.

   b. The questions can be read orally and require only negative or affirmative responses. Most other self-concept tests require gradations of answers such as "almost always, occasionally, almost never." These gradations are too difficult for many special needs children to properly comprehend.

3. *Occupational Awareness* - - - An adaptation of the "Vocational Interest and Sophistication Assessment (VISA).

   The occupational awareness assessment is patterned after a modified form of the VISA which was developed by Joseph J. Parnicky, Harris Kahn, and Arthur D. Burdett under a VRA Grant No. 1221 at the Edward R. Johnstone Training and Research Center in Bordentown, New Jersey. While the original VISA is based upon line drawings of persons in various institutional occupations, some of the 19 occupations represent positions traditionally thought to be held by persons with special needs and others represent positions in which special needs persons are generally not considered to be employed.

For each photograph, the student is individually asked these four questions:

1. What is this person doing?
2. What is his job title?
3. What else might he do on his job?
4. Where does he usually work?

The student's verbatim responses are recorded and matched against a rating sheet which classifies all answers as (+) excellent, (√) satisfactory and (o) unsatisfactory. Such an analysis on each question can determine general awareness and understanding about job tasks, job titles and work environments. The teacher can then structure the Career Development Program to meet the specific occupational knowledge strengths of deficits of a student.

4. *Occupational Preference* Test - - - A Timed Drawing Experience. In addition to generally determining personal preferences of a student toward certain occupational areas, an educational planner needs to know how the demonstrated preferences relate to the student's school and home experiences and whether the aspirations are realistically attainable.

   A simple drawing test is instituted which allows each student to graphically illustrate up to nine occupations he would possibly like to enter when he graduates or leaves school. Each student has three minutes to draw each of eight drawings but that he could draw no more than eight. The ninth picture is to be a representation of the student's favorite occupation, which could be a repeat of one of the original eight.

   In order to allow students who are threatened by the written assessment to verbally express job preferences, the examiner tape records the student's verbal explanation of the drawing and asks if there is any occupations the student would like to consider but which he is unable to draw. This taping procedure allows the examiner to confirm the title of the occupation depicted in cases where the drawings alone are unclear.

RECOMMENDATION SHEET

The educational planners review the results of the Diagnostic Battery and complete the Recommendation Sheet. The recommendation sheet serves as an intermediary step between the interpretation of tests results and the completion of the total Educational Plan.

The educational planner uses the Battery of Test Results, cumulative record data, and observable performance in the classroom to determine whether the individual student has a strength or deficit in the four areas

(Academic, Self Concept, Occupational Awareness, and Occupational Preference). While a third grade reading level may be a strength for one student, the same level in reading may be a deficit area to a student with sixth grade math skills. No norms are set for any test. The student is examined and evaluated against his own capabilities and problem areas.

THE PRESCRIPTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES FORM

Once the target areas of strengths to capitalize upon or deficits to compensate for are identified, activities to meet the student's needs can be designed and recorded on a Prescriptive Instructional Activities Form.

STUDENT RECORD FORM

Progress on the discrete activities designed can be recorded on a pre-test post-test basis and kept in the student's personal folder. This accurate account of progress on a short term basis can be recorded on the Student Record Form so that modifications in the Educational Plan can be justified and made periodically when a student is not responding to the prescription outlined for him. The Battery of four instruments should be readministered on a post-test basis at the conclusion of one year of implementation of the Educational Plan and prior to a re-evaluation by the educational planner.

CONCLUSION

The systematic approach previously described begins with a diagnostic evaluation of the student's capabilities and constraints on those capabilities. This approach leads to the establishment of an individualized career development program tailored to the special needs of that student. Feedback systems for readjusting and prescriptive plan are incorporated on a short term basis through pre and post-testing of specific activities. Long term gains can be observed by a periodic readministration of the complete Diagnostic Battery.

The ultimate aim of the Diagnostic Prescriptive Plan is to provide the type of educational program that will lead to the special needs student's employability in an occupation which he preferred and in which he felt the greatest degree of self-confidence and competency.